

Road Trip for Book Sales—a Pilgrimage

Part Two

By Doug Boren

About a month after *Beyond the Horizons* was released, I decided to make an extensive road trip to the locales where the story took place. I thought that my chances of getting it into some of the tourist shops and bookstores in the area were good because of the “local” significance. But more than that, it was a pilgrimage of sorts for me. I had lived in years past at or near many of the locations, and the story came to mean so much to me, that I felt I owed it to my characters to walk the same ground they had. To live vicariously a small part of their lives, even if for a short time.

Day One, continued

Back on the Interstate, the miles sped away without any further incident. My car truly seemed none too worse for what had happened, and I began to feel better. I breathed a sigh of relief and decided to resume my search.

Keeping one eye on the road, and one on the map in the front seat, I tried in vain to determine just where the heck I was, and where Ft. Craig might be. The information I had downloaded from the internet was false. The little excursion and subsequent run in with the druggie was for nothing... it had been the wrong road.

After about twenty more miles, my heart jumped when I saw the sign that proclaimed “Fort Craig Historic site next exit”. Once again I left the comfort of the highway for the graveled dusty country roads. There were several turn offs onto worsening roads, and soon it was little more than a one lane dirt path, rutted and bumpy. My body shook and teeth rattled almost continuously for another 35 miles.

There was not a building or town in sight. A few scattered clumps of trees was all that broke the landscape of the stark desert. But I was determined. This was, after all, what I had come here for, and I knew it wasn’t going to be easy.

Finally, I saw it. Scattered ruins of rock and adobe spread out over several acres. There was a dirt parking lot with a building under construction at one end. I parked at the trail head and turned off the car. “Gee, I hope it starts again”, I thought to myself.

Walking the trail that meandered through the ruins, I became more and more excited by the minute. *This is where it happened!* This is where the two armies first clashed! My eyes are seeing the same thing that Mace and the others saw!

Well, sort of. These were ruins, not intact buildings and walls. My imagination ran wild as my mind’s eye could see how it must have been in 1862. Standing atop the ramparts, I could imagine what it must have been like to look across the desert and see thousands of Confederate soldiers coming towards you. Seeing those thick stone and adobe walls, I could readily see how difficult it would have been to attack such a strong fort. No wonder Sibley decided to bypass it, and lure the Union Army onto the desert at the battle of Valverde.

I used up two discs in my digital camera, taking pictures of everything I could. My plan to make a photo companion book for *Beyond the Horizons* was taking shape. Yep... it was gonna be good.

I was there for nearly an hour, communing with the spirits of the soldiers, and finally decided to get back to the visitor's center to try to sell my book. The man who greeted me outside the building was an older gentleman, with a wad of tobacco in his jaw.

"Mornin'... how you doin'?" he asked.

"Great. I had a bit of trouble finding this place, but I'm glad I did. This is a fantastic bit of history here."

"Yup. Not many folks even know there was a Civil War in New Mexico. But this was once an important fort back in those days."

"I know," I agreed. "That's why I'm here. I wrote a book about it, and I wanted to see the place for myself."

"Do tell."

"Yeah, and I was hoping I could get you guys to sell it in your gift shop. It would be the perfect book, seeing as how part of it takes place right here."

"Well you're right about that, but the trouble is, we aren't open for business yet. The building won't be finished for another couple of months."

My heart sank. A golden opportunity seemed to be lost.

"You got a copy of it?" he asked.

I showed it to him, and his eyes seemed to light up.

"I do a lot of readin'. Not much else to do way out here all by m'self. Tell you what... lemme buy a copy off of you. And I'll tell my supervisor about it. She wants to improve this place as much as she can before we open. I'm pretty sure she'll agree to stock it."

I was elated. My first sale! And the promise to stock the book on an ongoing basis! This was perfect. I sold him a copy, and left my press kit with him to show his supervisor so she would know more, and be able to order it without problems.

The genial old man spit a long dollop of tobacco juice onto the parking lot and said, "thank you Mr. Boren. I'll see that we take care of this."

"I really appreciate it," I replied. "Can you tell me how to get to the Valverde Battlefield?"

"You get back on the interstate and head north for about five miles. But you can't get there. The river's changed course since then, and there ain't no way to get to the battlefield. Nuttin' to see

anyway... no markers or nuttin'. Just drive north and look to your right. That would be where the battlefield was."

I thanked him and got back in my car. I was relived when the engine started, and once again had the optimistic, good feeling about this trip. My first sales pitch had gone well. Maybe it was an omen.

Reaching the Interstate, I drove past the Valverde battlefield, trying to imagine just where it was. At least I could see what the land was like... and what my characters had gone through.

I smiled as I headed north, towards Albuquerque, and Glorieta Pass... the "Gettysburg of the West".

To be continued...

For information about *Beyond the Horizons*, go to: www.dougboren.homestead.com/Beyond.html